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The Translation of the Bible into the Languages of the Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East: Describing the Current Situation

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Abstract. The article is focused on the problem of the Bible translation into the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East. The purpose of the study is to highlight the current Bible translation into the languages of the peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East. The authors stress the importance of the Bible as a source of cultural heritage and a means of support and maintaining of the dying or minority languages through its translations. The history of the Bible translation as a whole and more narrowly – on the materials of the Russian Institute for Bible Translation is given in the article, with the corresponding description of the problems which the translators face. The main difficulties as regards the translation of the Bible into the languages of ethnic minorities are complex grammar structures, absence of full equivalents of culture-specific languages in the target languages, and the insufficient fluency of the recipients of the texts in their native languages. The translation process involves consulting with the international array of specialists in these languages and the approbation by the native speakers.

Keywords: peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East, the Bible translation culture.

Research area: ethnography, ethnology, anthropology and Translation Studies.

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Перевод Библии на языки коренных народов Севера, Сибири и Дальнего Востока: описание текущей ситуации

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена проблеме перевода Библии на языки коренных малочисленных народов Севера, Сибири и Дальнего Востока. Цель исследования – осветить современный перевод Библии на языки народов Севера, Сибири и Дальнего Востока. Авторы подчеркивают важность Библии как источника культурного наследия и средства поддержки умирающих языков или языков меньшинств посредством ее переводов. В статье приведена история перевода Библии в целом и более узко – по материалам Российского института перевода Библии, с соответствующим описанием проблем, с которыми сталкиваются переводчики. Основными трудностями при переводе Библии на языки этнических меньшинств являются сложные грамматические структуры, отсутствие полных эквивалентов языков, специфичных для конкретной культуры, в языках перевода и недостаточное свободное владение получателями текстов их родным языком.

Ключевые слова: народы Севера, Сибири и Дальнего Востока, культура перевода Библии.

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Introduction

Over the course of cultural history of the multinational country – Russia – such world religions as Christianity and Islam have been, and still remain, the most essential part in its cultural legacy. The importance of the Bible Scriptures and Quranic texts, which mean a basic discourse pattern for the believers, can hardly be overestimated. It should be noted, however, that these sacral texts are named as the most remarkable cultural heritage that cannot be isolated merely by the religious discourse. One has to agree with a famous statement of academician Dmitry Likhachev that the Bible is a key to reveal and understand the culture.

If so concerning the Christian culture, then for the Islamic one this key is the Quran. Recently, the knowledge of such fundamental sacral texts not only for religious denominations, but also for those who do not adhere to any religion or atheists, has become a vital necessity, since these texts describe the features of Christian and Islamic cultures – the “geography” of which differs from their real borders – to the fullest extent possible. Alongside with religious plots, the Bible and the Quran include fundamental aesthetic values, upon which moral principles have been brought up. Crucially, the system of morality and aesthetics reflected in the texts, which belong to the world religions, have an

undoubted axiological importance for the human world culture as well.

The Bible remains not only one of the most meaningful and popular religious texts, but also an undeniably unique literary and art heritage of the world culture, named (as certain literary work) as aesthetic and artistic phenomenon. The Bible raises the issues which are still pressing today, i.e. the problems of morality, what is right and what is wrong, life purposes, social relationship, etc. The ideas, plots and characters of the Bible – that functions not only as a constant precedent text of the world culture, but as an “arche-text” (Orlova, 2010) – are echoed in philosophy and literary works, as well as in a variety of other arts.

The Bible Scripture – a unique religious and cultural object – is both a universal subject to be investigated, since it can get a comprehensive description under an all-sciences principle of complementarity developed by Niels Bohr in quantum physics (Bohr, 1934). Being considered as a decisive religious phenomenon, the Bible text is analyzed particularly in the field of the Bible studies, which integrate a number of specific disciplines (textology, hermeneutics, exegetics, isagogics, etc.). Outside the religious context the Bible is of great interest for historians, archaeologists, philologists and other researchers.

Arguably enough, the Scripture is attributed as a “strong” text of the world culture and as a cultural heritage, belonging to the entire humanity. Following the notion of cultural grid, proposed by André Lefevere, *one may state that just like “strong” literary texts the Bible becomes localized* in the nodes of textual and cultural grids and maintains the persistence (“rigidity”) of cultures (Christian ones), forms the core part of national cultures (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998). Following Natalia Kuz'mina we assume that “strong” texts traditionally possess a high energetic potential, have a large audience, constantly share their energy with their readers and receive energy from the readers, which is many times strengthened due to the informational resonance with other “strong” texts of their and other cultures (Kuz'mina, 2009). “Strong” texts are conventionally included into the set of national education canons of different

levels. Another feature of “strong” texts is their ability to be re-interpreted through the means of various semiotic systems (Razumovskaya, 2018). As suggested by Roman Jakobson, such texts are subjected to intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic translation (Jakobson, 1959), among which the second one has already got the most remarkable attention.

With regard to interlingual translation, the Bible has become one of the most translated texts ever. According to Wycliffe Global Alliance, “a community of more than 100 diverse organizations and networks serving together in the Bible translation movements around the world”, the Bible has been translated into more than 3350 languages as for October 1, 2018 (Wycliffe Global Alliance). Of these, the full Bible Scripture (Books of the Old and New Testaments) is translated into 638 languages, the Gospels – into 1534 languages, and certain parts of the Scripture – into 1133 languages. Eugene Nida, a famous linguist and author of the dynamic equivalence theory developed on the material of Bible translations, named the Bible “the book of a thousand tongues” (Nida, 1972). The report published on Wycliffe Global Alliance’s website says that there is a strong demand for the Bible translations into 1879 spoken and 284 sign languages. The history of Bible translations dates back to the period of origin and expansion of Christianity and has already had a tremendous impact on the development of translation theory and practice – that has repeatedly been and, undoubtedly, will remain the subject of specific studies. There is a number of views on periodization for the Bible translations – the one which is contemporary comes from the translation into the languages with a recently created system of writing and spoken languages.

The Bible translation into the languages of the Russia and CIS nations is traditionally regarded as one of the most important factors for their development (Aleksseev et al., 2010), that entirely meets the demand for the Bible translation into the world’s languages (Gerner, 2018). The same holds true for the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East. In this context, every translated text represents a unique translation experience,

cultural phenomenon and invaluable material for the studies. It is worth noting that the Bible translation offers not only an effective way to preserve the language, but a viable means for its fixation and development, that is urgently important for endangered languages across the Post-Soviet territories. Thus, the issues of Bible translations stay inherently together with universal and general scientific problem of the modern humanity, i.e. how to preserve endangered and vanishing languages. At the present stage of human development, the society has become responsible for not merely what is happening in the world, but also for the saving of dying languages (Crystal, 2000; Nettle & Romaine, 2000). Importantly, the problem of linguistic extinction in the region under our consideration is not a problem of this country only, since it has been mentioned in the works dedicated to the mankind's problem of linguistic death (Kazakevich & Kibrik, 2008). The languages we are mostly interested in have a rich history and belong to different linguistic families (as of the Altai, Ural, Chukotko-Kamchatkan, Paleosiberian languages, etc.). It is fair to assume that they still exist due to their geographical isolation, for example, in the Subarctic and Far East districts. Now there has come the time when they may disappear into thin air, unless we preserve them. At the same time, the analysts point out some objective challenges waiting around the corner for the theorists of the Bible translation into the languages with a recent system of writing and spoken languages: "Neither we have any guarantee that the translation language fully matches the language used by the speakers in the case when the Scripture is being translated into the language under vanishing. Still, the method used for that type of translation, brings a hope, anyway, that these texts would be preserved in the language that has, more or less, been used by its speakers. The Bible translation cannot be called as author's translation. In each case a group of experts approves the final version that has to suffer many stages of exegetical, philological and stylistic editing and comprehensive analysis made together with a group of native speakers who still can be found" (as cited in Beerle-Moor, 2010).

In the context of linguistic development, we note that the translation of the Bible Scriptures allows enriching the language and culture with new senses, artistic images and plots full of humanistic ideas and highly-moral ideals that implies an essential factor for the language evolution. "Over the long centuries namely the Bible translations have been shaping many national traditions, introducing them, on the one hand, to the world cultural treasures, and, on the other – allowing them to form distinctive and original genres and literary devices. In this regard, the Bible versions into the languages of the Russian Federation and CIS nations continue that long-lasting tradition" (as cited in Chelyshev, 2010). The Bible gives an opportunity to the peoples speaking the target languages to discover a new world full of new notions, ideals and values, and influences their mentality beyond a shadow of a doubt.

The Bible translation into the languages of non-Christian cultures helps to handle certain obstacles of faith-based nature in a multi-religious, multilingual and polycultural world. Such translation into non-Christian languages meets democratic requirements of interethnic and interreligious tolerance, mutual respect and understanding between people. Thus, this translation chases general scientific, cultural and human goals.

In this way, the Bible translation into the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East should be considered though a number of perspectives (i.e. linguistic, socio-linguistic and culture studies); it requires the development of certain methodology that would help to solve the gravest issues of stylistic, pragmatic and lexico-semantic nature. The Bible translation brings the light on some topical linguistic and culture studies problems, via creating an opportunity to read the Bible in one's mother-tongue, cross-cultural enriching and preserving of the languages across the Post-Soviet territory and giving them a chance of further evolution.

Literature Review

The analysis of Bible translations into the languages of the indigenous peoples of North, Siberia and Far East is featured with certain

academic tradition. They are preceded by the works on full Bible translation in Russian and the languages of peoples who lived across the Russian Empire, Soviet Russia and Post-Soviet Russian Federation (Men', 2002; Rizhskii, 1978, 2007; Tikhomirov, 2013).

The versions the Bible in the languages of the indigenous peoples of North, Siberia and Far East attract scientific interest in many historical perspectives. Above all, the historians reconstruct the Christian missionary in Siberia of the 16th – 21st centuries. Christianization of the indigenous peoples of Siberia in the 16th – 20th centuries is described by Larisa Aisner (2010). Aleksander Sannikov (2013, 2016) addresses the missionary activity of first bishops in Irkutskaya Oblast' (Eastern Siberia). The work of Lev Tresviatskii (2016) models the ways how the indigenous peoples of Siberia were converted to Christianity in the 17th century. Natalia Kharina in (2016) explores the origin of Christianization of Northern indigenous peoples, who lived near the Ob' (Central Siberia). If to look more broadly, Vladimir Puzanov characterizes the missionary activity of the Russian Orthodox Church in Siberia of the 17th century (2016). Certain periods of this activity are examined in the papers of Vladimir Ovchinnikov (2010), Inna Yurganova (2014), Olga Tsys' (2017), Marina Zlygosteva (2014) and other analysts.

Academic researchers emphasize the importance of Scriptures in the process of education of those peoples who inhabited the Russian Empire in the 19th and early 20th century. Thus, Irina Kubantseva (2015) investigates how liturgical books influenced the work of Mikhail Atamanov, who translated the Bible into Udmurt. Publishing activity of unconventional cults in Siberia in the 20th – 21st centuries is touched upon in (Posadkov, 2017). Lyudmila Egle looks into the importance of spiritual poems for the culture of Siberian peoples (2014). The value of translations of certain fragments of the Bible for the first peoples in Siberia and North and the role of orthodox monkhood in this process is revealed in the studies by Natalia Shafazhinskaia (2010). Natalia Klimovich, in her turn, focuses on intertextual biblical expressions, suggesting her own classification of

these linguistic units (Klimovich, 2013). Educational role of orthodox libraries for Siberian regions is described by Kristina Kuzoro (2011); Aleksandra Terekhina analyzes the languages of indigenous peoples in the context of evangelization (2014). Andrey Onishchenko concerns educating aspect of the Bible as the main one when building the modern culture of indigenous peoples of North, Siberia and Far East (2015). Sargylana Nikitina in her works (2011) has highest regard to the contribution of Yakutian orthodox missionaries in Yakut versions of the Bible.

Another aspect of the studies of Bible translations into the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East is related to the range of linguistic and linguocultural problems of this type of translation. Yulia Dorkina points out linguistic and cultural toughness when translating Biblical fixed phrases (2014). Linguocultural structuring of linguistic features involved in the Bible translation into Chuvash is analyzed by Vladimir Mukin and Irada Mukina (2014). Georgii Khukhuni and Anna Osipova (2013) address special aspects of how the idea of progress might be translated in different versions of the Bible. Gennadii Pikov (2010) explains such specific component of the Scriptures as "criminology" and its degree of complexity for translation into various languages. Tatiana Tsiklina concentrates her analysis on the translation of certain lexical items of the Bible in Moksha (2007).

Among the indigenous peoples of North, Siberia and Far East there is a group of Turkic peoples of Southern Siberia. These include Altai, Khakassian and Tuva ethnoses. Linguistic peculiarities of sacral orthodox texts translated into these languages are the interest of Tamara Borgoiakova and Aurik Guseinova (2018).

It is also worth commenting on the modern studies of cultural and linguocultural processes taking place among the indigenous peoples of North, Siberia and Far East. Recently, in humanities and social sciences this branch has been reflected through a number of works grounded in field studies and their conceptual summaries (Koptseva & Reznikova, 2015; Koptseva & Kirko, 2014; Razumovskaya, 2014; Seredkina & Koptseva, 2018; Sitnikova, 2018;

and others). Specific nature of cultural and confessional representations in the indigenous peoples living in these regions is analyzed by Yevgeniia Savelova, Nadezhda Riabinina and Aleksandr Shuneiko (2005). Vadim Turaev accentuates his attention to the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the culture of small indigenous peoples of Far East in the period of 17th – 19th centuries (2012).

Among these studies another group can be identified – the one related to the history of translation of some Scriptures into the languages of indigenous peoples of North, Siberia and Far East. Thus, Yulia Khazankovich marks particular time in the history of Evenki literature associated with the translation of some texts of the New Testament into the Evenki language (2009). Elvira Ivanova makes a comparison between Evenki folklore and the Holy texts through the perspective of linguistics and culture studies (2017). The Biblical scenes in Buryat folklore are found and reviewed by Valeria Sameeva (2013). Nadezhda Bulanova assumes that the Scriptures in Evenki can contribute to preserving this language in the global linguistic space (2014). Vladimir Bicheool and Yelena Khalina (2015) consider the Evenki version of the Holy Text in the context of general history of Orthodox Christianity among the Evenks.

A special relevance of Institute for Bible Translation for the versions into the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East is mentioned in the studies by Tatiana Maiskaya (2015).

Another researcher, Boris Kleiman, assumes that when translating the Bible into the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia, it is necessary to know basic folklore characters popular in these ethnoses (2016). Dmitrii Arziutov outlines the importance of translation of Christian texts into these languages under the process of Russian colonization of Gorny Altai (Altai Republic) (2014), whereas Natalia Tadysheva (2010) analyzes the translation of orthodox texts into the Altai language. A great role in translation activities that allowed the Altai peoples to read the Holy Bible in their native languages was played by Metropolitan Makary (Glukharev).

The analysis of translation work made by the orthodox bishops of Siberia can be also found in the papers by Boris Tikhomirov (2017) and Maria Tolkacheva (2012).

Methods

The descriptive and comparative methods were mostly used to obtain relatively reliable and convincing results in the present research. The paper contains the detailed review of the recently published monographs and articles dealing with the issue of the Bible translations into the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East of Modern Russia. The descriptions of the most interesting publications can be found in the article. The comparative method is considered to be an effective technique for studying the translation variants of some Biblical lexical elements. The results of the conducted comparative analyzes were predominantly described in linguistic, cultural and translation aspects.

Results

Institute for Bible Translation in Russia unites not only translators, but also writers and poets, theologians, consultants and scholars, and is to complete the translation of parts of the Bible text in at least 65 languages, as enlisted on the site, including such rare languages as Tabasaran and Wakhi. They prepare translations into non-Slavic languages (the criterion of choice – the number of language speakers should be less than 50,000) to be presented immediately in different formats, including audio and apps. The most recent project was publishing the New Testament in the Lezgi language with an official stamp of approval from the Institute of Linguistics at the Russian Academy of Sciences (November, 2018).

The translation into languages of the indigenous people implies consulting with the current Bible translations into Russian, which totalled at least 7 (full texts). The common problems facing the translators are continuity with the precedent Russian texts of the Bible, which target audience generally know, and search for equivalents of non-existent in the recipient culture realias. The work is extensive: translators of the Bible into the Altai language

read not only Hebrew and Greek original texts, but also Holland, English and Russian Synodal translations (<http://rbo.spb.ru/prezent/altayskaya-prezentatsiya.htm>). Nevertheless, the first readers of 2003 edition complained about the difficulties in understanding complex grammar structures and in 2017 the new edition followed. The updated edition took into account many of the comments of the readers, the compilers adapted complex grammatical structures, gave some phrases and expressions greater naturalness, clarified some biblical terms and replaced uncommon words.

These updated translations avail of the precedent translations by the missionaries and the Russian Biblical Society. In the 1920s there appeared translations of the Gospels into Votyak (made by the priests of the Diocese of Vyatka), Vogul (Mansi) (made by archpriest Felitsun), Nenets (made by archimandrite Veniamin Smirnov). Despite the interdiction of the Russian Biblical Society the translation into the languages of the indigenous population of the North and Far East continued. Archbishop Nil Isakovich translated the Gospels into Buryat (the translation came out abridged). Saint Innocent of Alaska and his followers published the translation of the New Testament into Yakut (1859), made translations of the New Testament into Evenki, Kodiaks, Koloshi (Tlingit), which were never published.

As the earliest translation of the Bible into Yakut dates back to the 19th century, many terms were invented at the time and came out and dried to bring the challenges for the modern translators. In 2009 Institute for Bible Translations in Russia released the translation of the New Testament into modern Yakut language (the literary editor was the famous national writer – Dmitry Sivtsev (Suorun Omolloon)), and in 2012 a Book of Psalms in Yakut came out. The same year after almost 100-year interruption the clergy began to use the Yakut language during the church services thanks to the preceding translations and editions of the Bible in Yakut (see in detail Prokhorova, 2013).

It may seem that the most fortunate to get the translation of the Gospel texts into their native language were the Evens. The creation of the written language was connected with the

missionary activities of the Russian Orthodox Church among the indigenous population. It is known that in 1854 the archpriest of the Tauisk Church of the Intercession S. Popov, with the help of a retired Cossack sergeant Sheludyakov, translated the Gospel of Matthew into the Even language. After careful philological editing it was published in Kazan in 1880 and supposedly republished in Hungary in the 1980s. In the 1990s, Doctor of Philological Sciences Alexei Burykin (Institute for Linguistic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg) translated the Gospel of Luke into the Even language. It was published in full in the newspaper “Murgin Nutenut” in Anadyr in 1992–1993. One copy was transferred to the international organization “Open Doors” (the Netherlands) for distribution, another copy was sent as a gift to the Cathedral of the Transfiguration of Our Saviour on the occasion of its revival in 1993, the third is kept in the funds of the Magadan Regional Museum of Local Lore. The Archbishop of Magadan and Chukotka Rostislav called this translation of the Gospel of Luke into the Even language a godly deed (see in detail <https://primamedia.ru/news/96216/>).

In 2002, for the first time Gospel of Luke was published in Itelmen in a separate edition in Moscow. The publication was prepared by the Institute for Bible Translation a literal back translation into Russian. This is done since there are very few real native speakers. The preface states as such: “There was no task of translating the Holy Scripture into Itelmen in the 18th century. Orthodox missionaries began to start schools in Kamchatka and teach children literacy (in Russian) in the 19th century, when nobody even thought of translating at least the books of the New Testament into Itelmen language as the Itelmens were already bilingual and understood the sacred texts in Russian (Ibid).

The earliest translations of the Bible into the languages of the indigenous peoples of the Far North owe their existence to the missionary activities of hieromonk Nestor (Nikoli Anisimov), who came to Kamchatka in 1907. He was struck by misery and poverty of the indigenous population. In the second half of the 19th century the Russian government discontinued run-

ning errands in the Far North and the economy fell into a decline. The Chukchi, the Koryaks, the Yukagirs, having been christianized 70 years ago, did not even remember their Christian names. Shamans did everything possible to prevent further baptizations. Despite all this, a young priest in a short period of time learned basic Tungus (Evenki), Koryak and Even languages and even compiled first dictionaries and phrase-books. With the psalmists he managed to translate the Divine Liturgy, prayers, sermons, extracts from the Gospels into Koryak, and “Our Father”, the Ten Commandments, the Beautitudes into Tungus. The indigenous peoples notwithstanding the shamans’ clamour grew to like him and called Nestor “*mel-tumgytum*” or “*innaklek*” (“friend” in Koryak and Yukagir). From 18 to 25 February, 1914, there was first Kamchatka Congress of missionaries called by hieromonk Nestor. The native peoples took part in it. The Congress participants admitted the great importance of holding services and having conversations with the indigenous population, especially with the nomadic deer-herders, in their native languages. Nestor placed emphasis not only on prayers in the native languages, but also on the communication between the priesthood and the indigenous population. These were the priests who got the priceless experience of translation the Bible Scriptures into the minor languages of the Far North in 17th-19th centuries and at the beginning of the 20th century; many linguists and Bible scholars still benefit from this experience today, though the compiled by the priests dictionaries and phrase books were burned during the destruction of the Kamchatka and Petropavlovsk eparchy archives in the Soviet period (see in detail Belashov, 2013).

In 1995, in Stockholm, the first translation of the Gospel of Luke in the Chukchi language was published. In 2004, Institute for Bible Translation prepared and released 2 thousand copies of the first edition of the full text of the Gospel of Luke in the Chukchi language with the recording of the text on three audio cassettes. The translation was made by the first academic Chukchi woman – Candidate of Philological Sciences Irina Kulikova (Russian State Pedagogical University named

after A. Herzen), among the editors of the translation there is the Chukchi poetess Antonina Kymytval’. As in the case of biblical texts in the Even and Chukchi languages, the Gospel of Luke in Koryak first appeared in Stockholm in 1995. In 2005, in Moscow a separate edition was published in 1 thousand copies. The translation was carried out by Alevtina Zhukova, Doctor of Philological Sciences (Institute of Linguistic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences). The task of preparing the translation was complicated by problems associated with the lack of complete bilingual dictionaries, so a new biblical and religious vocabulary was to be developed specially for the Koryak language. The appearance of the Gospel of Luke in the Koryak language was timed to the celebration of the 300th anniversary of Orthodoxy in Kamchatka. The Bishop of Petropavlovsk and Kamchatka Ignatius wrote the opening address to him. An audio recording of the Gospel was also completed to make translation text more accessible to people who cannot read in their own language. The Yukagirs can read in their native language only excerpts from the Gospel of Luke in the multilingual edition “The Nativity of Jesus Christ”. The Eskimos, the indigenous people of Chukotka, are still deprived of the opportunity to read Gospel texts due to problem of the lack of translators (see in detail <https://primamedia.ru/news/96216/>).

Difficulties of translation consisted in incomplete vocabulary, lack of many key notions in the target language. Experts in the field of the Chukchi language noted a good literary level of translation and the comprehensibility of text for the indigenous population. The editors of the translation, who participated in recording the audiotape, repeatedly appeared on the local radio with reading excerpts from the Gospel. Institute for Bible Translation has approved this practice, since radio in the North is sometimes the only source of information.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this section we will specify the most demanding translation tasks which the translator into the languages of the peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East comes across.

Andrey Desnitsky, professor of Russian Academy of Science, gives an interesting example of how the continuity in translations of certain lexemes experiences influence of the change in the meaning of one and the same concept through the Old Testament to the New Testament. The concept of “clean” changes from ritual to more sublime: while “clean animals” (Gen 7:2) are translated as “элял айванлар” in Crimean Tatar language, “clean (pure, flawless) words” are translated in Psalms as “темиз сөзлер”, the share of “элял” translations giving way to “темиз” ones as “элял” bears the narrow meaning related to halal food (Desnitsky, 2015, 385). Whereas Russian translation knows no difference in two aspects of cleanliness, the adherents of Islam, as well as practitioners of Judaism, understand the sacral cleanliness of animals as their edibility. The same stays true for other Muslim people, who inhabit Siberia, but culture-specific elements of Judaism of the Old Testament and Christianity of the New Testament shall fit into the culture of the indigenous people who did not undergo Christianization until the recent times, so the translator has to rely on paraphrasing, contextualization, generalizations, finding synonyms, adding some explaining information.

The traditional beliefs of the indigenous people force the translators to avoid literal translation from Hebrew, though they understandable for the readers of Russian Synodal Bible. When translating “For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present” (1 Corinthians 5:3) into the Altai language, had to omit or modify “though absent in body but present in spirit” to avoid mistaking Paul for spirit being on a par with worshipped in the pagan culture spirits of wind, soil, etc. Thus, the translator opted for such translation: “though absent but with all my thoughts I am with you” (Desnitsky, 2015, 375).

The traditional ideas of deity and pantheism impede the translating of the key notions, such as “angels” and “demons”. In Chukchi translation they are defined by one and the same word, though it is followed by the commentary. The word chosen does not describe

the Christian reality, rather it is a personal spirit. As the translator mentions, “In the Chukchi traditional culture it is believed that my spirits are good, as they do everything good for me, but they may seem not so good to someone else”. So the researcher of the Chukchi translation draws a conclusion that angels in such understanding are personal spirits of someone, while demons are the spirits of this person’s enemy, which contradicts Christian tradition (Prokhorova, 2017, 4).

Moreover, Andrey Desnitsky warns about inadmissibility of literal translations, as, for example, it is impossible to translate “Christ became flesh” verbatim into Altai; the translators tried this variant: “Christ with the flesh came”. But the flesh is “et-kan”, literally “meat and blood” in Altai. And when it was translated, it turned out “Christ came with meat and blood”. For the Altai nomadic people meat and blood are the two main food products. And it happened that Christ came with food, as if to feed people. As a consequence, they had to translate as such: “Christ became a man” (Kaplan, 2006).

The replacement of the biblical generic names and culture specific elements by local analogues is a well-spread practice. The translators ran into an issue how to translate into the Shor language the Gospel phrase “Do men gather grapes from a thorn?” There are no words “thorn” or “grapes” in the Shor language. The translators tried the following: “Do they pick good berries from prickly bushes?” It turned out unreal, because in fact good berries (gooseberries, sea buckthorn, blackberries, etc.) are harvested from prickly bushes. So they had to replace “prickly bushes” and “good berries” with some specific local plants (Kaplan, 2006). One more stumbling block was one of the most important biblical words “Lamb”. The translation of this word into the languages of people who experienced the influence of Christianity or Islam was easier than into Chukchi? Obviously, the translator could just leave the Russian word, generally, the readers would understand. But then the important shades of meaning would be lost (“lamb” means something small, tender, touching). So, they risked and returned

the “lamb” into a “fawn”. “After all, Andrey Desnitsky comments, the Chukchi are deer-breeders, and a deer for them means the same thing as a lamb for a Caucasian or an Uzbek, or a Jew” (Kaplan, 2006).

The same domestication strategy is vastly used to dispose of the “alien” and incomprehensible structures in, for instance, translation of the Gospels into Yakut. For making the translation as if the authentic text the translators tried to use the expressive means of the Yakut language itself. One prime example: the phrase “you do the deeds of your father” (John 8:41) was translated by a characteristic Yakut fixed phrase, which literally means “you dry your father’s hooves”; the meaning of this idiom is “you are like your father in everything / you act like your father” (see in detail Kazenina, 1997). The sensitive attitude of the Yakuts to the purity of their native language prompted the translators to modify some already assimilated Russian words in accordance with the phonetic laws of the Yakut language. So the words “Pharisees” and “Sadducees” in Yakut now sound like “*barykhyai*” and “*sadykyai*”. When translating evangelical proper names, the translators reproduced not their Greek, but their Aramaic sound, since the latter harmonizes better with Yakut phonetics.

The translators had to reject a few assimilated Russian words, because over time the meaning of these words acquired a negative connotation. So, for example, the meaning of the word “*malyppa*” (“prayer”) has become perceived as a set of pious words that are whispered by grandmothers in a patter. In order to convey the meaning of this most important biblical concept more accurately, translators have found a different term (“*unuu – kordokhuu*”). In literal translation from Yakut this means “petition in worship”. All efforts to make the language of the Yakut translation really Yakut have been not in vain. Translation was appreciated by the native speakers (Ibid).

Vitaly Voinov, an exegetical checker and project coordinator with the Institute for Bible Translation in Russia, writes about a new translation strategy connected with unwanted connotations following transliterated names. This strategy is called disliteration and it involves

rendering the names with possible saving the original letter-by-letter structure, though changing it somehow to avoid unnecessary associations. Such a need arose with the transliteration name of Noah’s son Ham into Tuvan: “In Russian, the name of this character has entered the language with the meaning of “boorish lout, impudent person” because of how Ham treated his father; in Tuvan, however, the word “*хам*” (*kham*) means “shaman.” Since the Tuvan people continue to practice their traditional religion in which shamans play a major role, the translation team felt that leaving the transliteration of this name with the exact spelling as in Russian might cause needless offense to Tuvan sensibilities by unwittingly causing the text of Gen 9.20–27 to portray shamans as the targets of Noah’s curse. Therefore, the translation team chose to avoid this potential stumbling block while continuing to maintain a close sound correspondence with the name of the biblical character as Tuvan Christians already knew it from the Russian Synodal text. This was done by doubling the vowel – *Хаам*” (Voinov, 2012, 23).

Even common names require careful revision, Sargylana Leont’eva, the translator of the Song of Songs into Yakut remembers curious case when she tried to translate a young stag as a “gazelle’s calf” and decided to approbate the word “gazelle” as it is the animal not known for the Yakuts. Her brother assured her that everybody knows this word and that recently three gazelles had appeared in the nearby village. It helped the translator to realise that “gazelle” was misunderstood as the name of Russian cars “GAZelle” and had to look for another variant of translation (Prokhorova, 2018, 7). So not only traditional culture-specific elements should be taken into account, but also the modern ones. Hence, the translator should show acrobatic artistry to avoid inconsistencies and confusing associations especially when translating proper names (Vitaly Voinov found as many as 300 inconsistencies in translation of proper names in Russian Synodal Bible) and culture-specific elements. The main difficulties in the translation of key biblical concepts in these languages are associated with the absence of

any points of contact with Christianity in the religious tradition of northern peoples (Kazenina, 1997).

One more difficulty is connected with the fact that these minor languages, as it has already been mentioned, are on the verge of extinction. Not only native speakers are no longer fluent in their native languages, but the translators themselves. Sargylana Leont'eva, when translating the Book of Proverbs into Yakut had to refrain from speaking Russian to delve into the space of Yakutian semantics and images. She remembered that it came to her that her Yakut is dry and rather narrow, "while the real Yakut is the tailed and long-maned language, as the Yakuts acknowledge, comparing their language with the vice of Yakut prancer. It is Eastern gaudy language which was influenced greatly by the national epic. Living in the city, I hear mixed language with the abundance of the Russian words <...> For the fruitful work I needed to plunge into the nature of the native language, to roll in it" (Prokhorova, 2013). As for translation into such languages imbued with influence of national epic, many lexemes cannot be expressed by one word in these languages, therefore a descriptive expression is used instead. Sometimes there is no other way but to translate some biblical concepts with the help of Russian borrowing. However, in such cases, the translators strive to ensure that the borrowed word fits well into the lingual texture and does not become a foreign body in the language.

Conclusion

Nowadays, the continuous efforts are being made to translate the Bible Scriptures into the minor languages to familiarise the indigenous peoples with the literary heritage of Christian culture and to elaborate the written languages, to enrich them with the new ideas, concepts, images. It is a deplorable fact that apart from these translations nothing has been released in these languages since Soviet times.

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The review on scientific investigations of the Bible translations into the indigenous peoples' languages has demonstrated that the entire perception of these translations has not been introduced to the academic environment yet. It seems that the Bible translations into the languages of the indigenous peoples and the processes in their culture related to these translations are based on common linguistic, cultural and anthropological principles. The current work will reveal these principles in the light of certain linguistic and cultural character.

Thus, the issue of how to translate the Scriptures into the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East has been reviewed though historical, linguistic, cultural and anthropological aspects. All these findings have resulted in the fact that the Bible translated into the native languages of the indigenous peoples has acquired a huge importance for their culture. The Bible translation helps to standardise the language as the translations are revised by the groups of specialists, strengthen the ties between people, promotes moral values and serves as a means of uniting people when the native speakers are invited for the revision of translations and reading sessions. It contributes to the maintenance of writing tradition and gives prominence to the native languages which may make the indigenous people to keep their language, read and write in them. Gennady Kostochakov expresses hope for that Bible translation will help to revive the traditional syntax of the Shor language (as the sentences in the current Shor language tend to be short and lacking traditional structure) and that parallel texts of Bible into Russian and Shor will attract those who are interested in the native language but not so fluent in it (Kostochakov, 2010). The researchers among these indigenous peoples themselves believe that these translations can renew the languages and be preserved in the global world given that these languages are becoming endangered (e.g. Evenki or Dolgan).

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